

**A  
HANDBOOK  
FOR  
THE SPIRITAN  
RULE OF LIFE**

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1987x  
Spiritan  
Coll.**

**THE GENERALATE  
ROME  
1987**

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*Congregation of the Holy Spirit*  
*USA Eastern Province*

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1987

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## INTRODUCTION

*To accept this new Rule of Life in faith is surely an occasion of grace for each Spiritan. It is also an invitation to a renewal of life, personal, apostolic and community, and a rediscovery of the happiness of the Spiritan vocation.*

*The General Council considers as one of the most important of the tasks given it by the General Chapter the putting of the Rule of Life into effect. We are proposing to you then in the pages below an introduction to each of the new Rule's Chapters. This is not a scientific or even a systematic study of our Rule of Life. It has a more modest aim, setting out to introduce our fellow Spiritans to an understanding of the texts by showing how they came to have their present shape. We do underline, as it were, certain numbers that seem to us to be more fundamental while explaining clearly terms whose understanding might cause difficulty.*

*Some of us were there at the very first stages of the writing of the Rule of Life, we all took part in the final drafting each in his Commission, at the General Chapter. Because of this we felt we had something we could share with our brother Spiritans to help them welcome and understand our Rule of Life.*

### **How was the Handbook written?**

*Each Assistant took the Chapter or Chapters in which he felt most at home, either because of his personal experience or history, or because he had been in the Commission that the General Chapter put in charge of the final editing of the text. What individual Councillors wrote was read and reread by the General Council and this proved to be a first-class way for us to study and assimilate the text. Chapter 1 is the special work of Fr. James Okoye, Chapter 2 Fr. Manuel Gonçalves, Chapters 3, 4 and 5 Fr. François Nicolas, Chapter 6 Fathers Denis Wiehe and*

Manuel Gonçalves, Chapter 7 Fathers Michael Doyle and Joseph de Boer. Whatever traces of an individual's personal style may now remain on a particular Chapter, the General Council assumes responsibility for the entire Handbook.

### **How can the Handbook be used?**

Some confreres will certainly want to go first of all to the Rule of Life itself. For them this Handbook will serve as guide for a later more thoughtful, meditative and closer reading. There will be others who, going first through this Handbook, will be better prepared to welcome and take in the Spiritan Rule. For us all, the vital thing is that this Handbook challenge us individually and in community to consider deeply in our hearts. The Rule we now have is the fruit of the Congregation's quest ever since the first Chapter of "aggiornamento" in 1968-1969. For twenty years now the Congregation has been seeking to reread our Founders' charisms in the light of the Second Vatican Council and of the signs of the times. This quest does not come to a halt now that we have a Rule of Life; rather this is a moment to step up our effort to seek ever greater faithfulness and creativity.

### **Why the traditional name of "Rules and Constitutions" has been changed to "Spiritan Rule of Life".**

This title was chosen by the General Chapter, for the words "Rule" and "Constitution" either in common or in Church usage no longer mean what they used to. Our basic text used to be the Latin Rule, whose most essential words went all the way back to the Founders. Constitutions underwent innumerable alterations down the years. Nowadays a "constitution" means a charter, those ideas or things that are founding principles. So we are now choosing to speak of "constitution" and of "norms of application" so as to be in line with the terms the Church uses today. The basic text is the Constitution. The norms for their application - which, as printed, are inset on the page - determine in practical ways the constitutions' applications in Spiritan living. An article (Number) in the constitutions may be changed only with a two-thirds vote in favour by the mem-

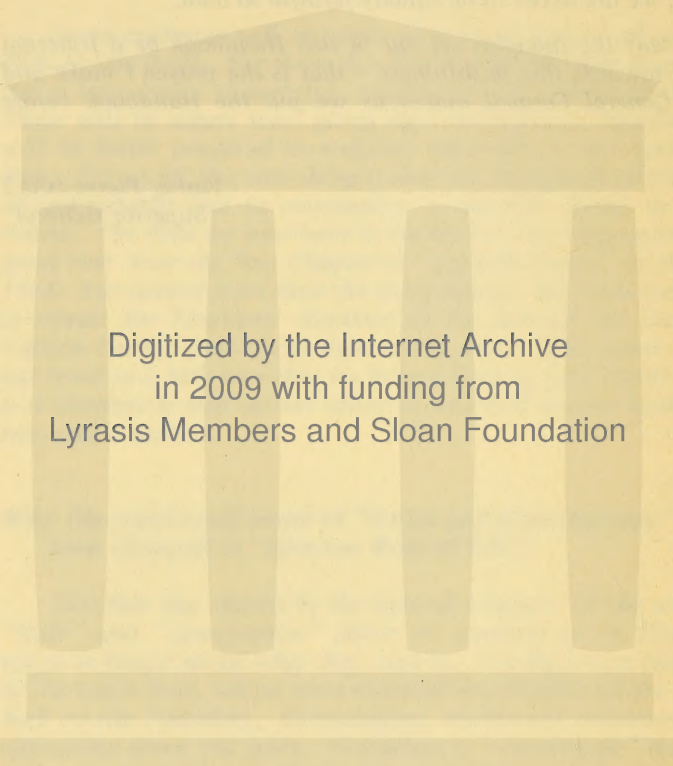


*bers of a General Chapter and with the proviso that the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes give approval. Norms for application are altered more simply by the General Chapter, with no need to have recourse to the Congregation for Religious.*

*Our Rule of Life consists of Constitutions and Norms, as a unit; we are asked to be equally faithful to both.*

*May the thoughts set out in this Handbook be a fraternal help towards this faithfulness - that is the prayer I make and the General Council makes as we put the Handbook before you.*

*Father Pierre HAAS  
Superior General*



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### Note:

The originals of Chapter 1 and 7 were written in English. Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 were done in French. This English version seeks to respect the vocabulary currently in use in French in treating of these subjects. The numbering system used follows that of the French edition.

Rome  
January 1988



## Chapter 1

### OUR SPIRITAN VOCATION

#### 1. The Scripture text: Luke 4:18-19

The history of the various ways in which Luke 4:18ff has been understood during the course of drafting gives the best indication as to how to read the Rule.

The first draft of Carcavelos (1983) placed our text in a context which suggested action to change unjust structures. Given a new context in the 1984 draft, Luke 4:18ff became expressly evocative, open to many meanings, yet evoking depths beyond any of the readings. Opposition to it fell off when it began to be seen as assembling the main themes of Spiritan life and apostolate: the Holy Spirit (appropriately the first evocation of the Rule) as source and sustainer of the apostolic spirit (No.6), apostolate inserted within the movement outwards from the Trinity, consecration (baptismal and religious), mission ("sent"), the centrality for Spiritans of the service of the Good News, the particular Spiritan style of Justice and Peace... It was a text which could rally the various cultures and apostolic styles within the Congregation, while yet challenging them to see beyond themselves. As a symbol, it was able to hold within itself and to reconcile contrasting options. Three complementary interpretations were evident:

- the sense of engagement to change unjust structures: Justice and Peace,
- the sense of envisaging the whole man:  
(sacramental and ecclesial concern is reconciled with development work and action to change society's structures),
- the sense of option for the poor:  
(marginalised, immigrants, refugees, Third World...).

The bible uses many images to describe the benefits that will accrue to men from God's Reign: banquet, life, joy, light,



peace, love... justice. Justice is in the first place God's justice, which justifies the sinner, brings near to Him those who are afar – a divine example of option for the poor. It is also a situation on earth in which all rights, human and divine, will be respected, especially the rights of the "widow, orphan and stranger". That the poor hear this good news of deliverance (cf. Luke 7:22) is one of the signs of the "age to come".

The laws of Hebrew parallelism show that "afflicted", "captives," "blind", "oppressed" are placed in the same field of meaning – those for whom God's Reign will bring special cause for joy, for at last their rights are assured. Giving sight to the blind is not a call for Spiritans to perform healings (would that all had the charism!), "blind" is simply the Septuagint rendering for "prisoners" in the Hebrew text of Isaiah 61:1. Captive Israelite nobility were usually blinded, common prisoners of war were usually dumped into dark dungeons.

The Rule located the Spiritan charism within the Lucan perspective on Christ as opting for the "poor" (pagans, publicans and sinners, women...), of the Spirit's role in Church and mission (Gospel–Acts), of Mary's fruitfulness through "overshadowing" by the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 1:35).

## 2. Sent...Consecrated (No.1)

The very first number of our Rule begins and ends with a Trinitarian movement. Spiritan life and apostolate comes from and moves back into the life of the Trinity. The two poles of this life and apostolate are missionary (*sent*) and religious (*consecrated*), deriving from Christ, who in the opening scripture (Luke 4:18) was "anointed" and "sent". It is in this sense that Spiritan life is a following of Christ.

The 1986 text widened the vista in two ways. "Today, he carries on this mission of salvation in the *Church*" (1985 draft) was altered to, "He continues in the world of today this mission of salvation of which the Church is the sacrament". The earlier text located salvation within the Church, and saw mission mainly as bringing people to her or extending her influence. The latter includes this but also opens out into king-

dom-related activity in the world. The field of Christ's salvific activity is seen to encompass the entire world. Secondly, "Jesus the Christ *desires* to save all men", was altered to "Jesus the Christ *came* to save all people". God's will of salvation for all is effective and operates also outside the visible boundaries of the Church; hence, a mission as dialogue.

### 3. Multiple Vocations (No.1)

Spiritans are called to recognise, to inspire and use the charisms of the faithful, including missionary charisms. This can have tremendous impact on our style of apostolate.

### 4. Missionary (No.2)

All the drafts from Carcavelos to the 1986 Chapter defined the Congregation as "apostolic religious". The word "missionary" was causing some problems. There was a new awareness of "mission in six continents". Third World nations resented the notions of dependence implied in the word "missionary". Confreres who were identifying at home with inner city dwellers or who were in works of education (in a de-christianised context) could not accept the dichotomy between "mission" and "education". This was true so long as "mission" seemed to mean uniquely "going abroad". It became possible for all to accept the word "missionary" when, in the very last week of the Chapter, consensus was reached on mission as spreading Trinitarian life and intentions beyond the visible Church, and this, whether at home or abroad, in five senses:

- numerical extension;
- geographical extension;
- some particular services to local Churches, e.g. youth; formation of laity, of catechists;
- evangelisation of culture;
- transformation of society in the image of the Kingdom.

In this understanding of the reality, every Spiritan ought to be on mission (hence Chapter 2 includes all Spiritan en-

gements under the title, *Our Mission*, altered from *Our Apostolic Life* as in the drafts of 1984 and 1985).

## 5. The Charisms (No.2)

This is the first time that an official document of the Congregation affirms that we have a double charism, two founders.

Poullart des Places shared food served to him at table, as well as his personal allowance, with poor seminarians whom he later formed into the Holy Ghost Seminary. He provided for chimney sweeps to whom he taught both religion and the alphabet. His seminary evolved into a society for evangelisation in Europe and elsewhere. Libermann began with concern for the evangelisation of Africa, but he, too, soon turned his attention to Europe. He stressed the formation of priests as essential both to mission and to the defence of the "weak and poor". To ensure that Spiritans continue to soar on two wings, the Chapter asked for better study and promotion of the charism of Poullart des Places.

## 6. Creative (No.2)

1985 draft: "and in fidelity to our tradition". Rule: "and fidelity to our tradition, urge us to respond creatively to the needs of evangelisation of our time".

Tradition can become obsolete or harmful, and appeals to it may lead to unexamined acceptance of what has always been done. The Rule challenges us to discernment, in order to reproduce the spirit of the Founders in the conditions of our time. "Of evangelisation" was a specification put in at the demand of CRSI (The Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes).

The official title of the Congregation is, "Congregation of the Holy Spirit under the protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary". English-speaking circumscriptions may retain "Holy Ghost" if they wish.



## 7. Apostolic Life (No.3)

This number is the key to understanding Chapter 2 through 5. "Apostolic life" appears in inverted commas only in this Chapter, for here it encompasses all the fundamental elements of Spiritan life. The quotation from Libermann sees as one Christ's paschal mystery and his going about preaching. These two are but one work given him by the Father, to whom he was obedient until death. Spiritans, in Christ, are drawn into this unity of task, obedience and self-sacrifice.

Three dimensions are mentioned. Prayer, a last-minute addition, is related to the community dimension, but not reduced to it. Carcavelos (1983) voted to dedicate a chapter to prayer (Chapter 5). It was clear that Carcavelos regarded prayer as a total dimension of Spiritan life, of equal import with mission, practice of the evangelical counsels and with community. It is not just with personal and/or common prayer. Our practice of the evangelical counsels is prayer (No.53) just as our apostolic activity is meant to be prayer (No.87). The debate which had been going on since the 1968 Chapter on the relative importance for us of apostolate and religious life, apostolate and community is now ended – all are to be held in creative tension.

## 8. Evangelisation of the "poor" cf. Luke 4:18 (No.4)

The inverted commas at "poor" mark it as relating to the biblical hope for God's Reign. In Chapter 2 and elsewhere in the Rule, the word poor does not always have this precise connotation. Evangelisation is used in that full theological sense in which it embraces both spiritual and so-called "secular" engagements in view of the Gospel. A phrase like "preaching good news to the poor" could be given a one-sided interpretation. "Evangelisation" and "poor" become criteria of discernment: *every* Spiritan engagement *must* conform to these.

To avoid every idea of primary and secondary ends, the word "purpose" was used. "Mission" could have been used,

but the new consensus on this word had not yet crystallised in the General Chapter's development when Chapter 1 was given approbation.

## 9. "Therefore" (F. *donc*) (No.4)

The Chapter voted on this word which qualifies everything in No.4 as evangelisation of the "poor". Notice that the fields evoked are both spiritual and material/social. This number is related to Chapter 2 as germ to seed, inspiration to concretisation. No.4 contains the perspective, the Spiritan dimension of works, Chapter 2 gives details. No.4 tries to answer *why* a work is Spiritan; Chapter 2 attempts to name *what* can be Spiritan. Why is first evangelisation (Chapter 2) seen as Spiritan? Because it is a ministry to people in dire spiritual need whom very few want to help or are equipped to help (No.4). What about works of education (Chapter 2)? In some places and times, some circumscriptions after a process of discernment can see them as evangelisation of the "poor" (No.4).

What has happened to the term "poor and abandoned"? Words have, or take on, a history. Modern sensitivity to working *with* and not *for* the poor found difficulties with the word "abandoned", and as early as Carcavelos it was decided by vote not to retain this word.

## 10. The Spirit and Mary (Nos 5, 6)

These two numbers are the key to Chapter 5. They attempt a summary of Spiritan spirituality. Mary is our model for the union of prayer and apostolate as flowing from one centre, the "love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us" (Romans 5:5). Such love necessarily tends towards apostolic zeal, which "does not spring from impulsiveness of character, but from union with the Lord" (1984 draft, No.38, unfortunately allowed to drop). The basis is willing obedience to the Holy Spirit.

## 11. *Cor Unum et Anima Una* (No.7)

The community as one body grows into Christ and seeks to become a more effective instrument in his hands. In mutual affection and support, in the variousness of our cultures and apostolates, in our sharing of the one faith, the one hope and love, we are drawn into and we manifest the unity of life and love between the Father and the Son.

## 12. Conclusion

Chapter 1 is the Rule, as it were, in germ. The other Chapters unfold what Chapter 1 contains in a very condensed manner.

Our Rule represents a new dynamic consensus achieved through a crossfertilisation process. It incorporates riches from various parts of the Spiritan world without imposing on all what is peculiar to some. For example, No.5 of the 1984 Draft ran as follows:

“We are witnesses of a new age. The Spirit of God inspires us to prophetic action for justice, and to be wholeheartedly involved in freeing all human beings...”

This text was dropped, but the insight it enshrines and the trend it bespeaks can be found throughout the Rule, integrated in the warp and woof of Spiritan life.



## Chapter 2

### OUR MISSION

Chapter 2 spells out how we are to live the first element of our “apostolic life”, which is the “proclamation of the Good News” (No.3). It introduces “our mission”, that is the main criteria used to select our proper apostolate, our various tasks, the missionary spirit that should animate us, and, implicitly or explicitly, the challenges the modern world poses for us.

The drafting of Chapter 2 caused some problems all through the process of writing the Rule. There are parts of mission understood differently by members of the Congregation. This comes from differences between cultures or, more importantly, the evolution that has happened in the theology of mission since the Second Vatican Council. What has been happening is that mission theology evolves in function of a reality that is itself developing and mutating – (the life and times of humankind), moreover theology develops both in how it is worded and what it deals with. Here lie the reasons why the Rule, as it seeks to reconcile diverse points of view, describes the reality that is our apostolate as fitting in with “the points that the Church is currently stressing in mission” and “in communion with the Church as it is in our time” (Nos 13, 13.1).

The main ideas of Chapter 2:

#### 1. “In the power of the Spirit” (No.8)

The opening section of Chapter 2 sets out the theological underpinning and the spiritual dynamism of our mission. This is presented in a very dense text, based upon two themes, the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit’s action. “The Spirit of

the Risen Lord, working in the Church and in the world gives life and direction to our entire apostolic life" (No.8). The two scripture quotes that are at the beginning of the Chapter (the Easter sending out of the Apostles; mission as reconciliation and as witness), the reference to the resurrection of Christ and to the Spirit of Pentecost, the idea of the "power of the Spirit" that occurs so frequently in the Acts of the Apostles – all of this recalls what the Church experienced of mission in apostolic times.

For the 1984 draft, the idea comes up, of putting a couple of paragraphs right at the end of this Chapter, summarising Father Libermann's spirituality of mission. In answer to what many confreres asked, the next draft reduced these paragraphs and put them at the opening of the Chapter, to emphasise their importance. The General Chapter added to this spirituality section still further, by referring to the Risen Christ and the Spirit's activity in the Church, in the world and in the hearts of all who serve the Gospel.

The Spirit of God is at work in the world (No.8) and even goes before (No.15.3) those who announce the Gospel. This viewpoint of faith opens out into a theology of religions and cultures, and a missionary spirit that embraces all these ideas. There is in the same spirit too a comprehensiveness extending to other cultures and to other religions. What is more, this spirit is attentive to the signs of the times, which are also "signs" of the Holy Spirit.

The principal field of action of the Holy Spirit is always the Church. It is by design that No.8 speaks in the first place of the Church. The power that culminates in the birth of a new world, through the Christian people, is the power of the Spirit of Pentecost. The missionary colloquium of Francheville (Lyon, 1983) speaks of the Church living the times of the Spirit of Christ who sends on mission.

The Holy Ghost is also "source of the apostolic spirit" (No.6). The action of the Spirit is the source of apostolic strength (Nos.8–10) and also of that "availability" as a missionary that No.25 considers a "basic characteristic of the Spiritan calling" for all who are serving the mission.

Consideration of the relationship between the Church's

mission and the resurrection of Christ gives us an outlook that transforms the realities of society. The goal of mission is "to see the same love (of God) established in the hearts of all people" (No.9), for a Kingdom of justice, of liberty, of fraternal peace in Christ. The Gospel is Good News for each person and all peoples (No.11).

A question we might well put to ourselves would be: Have we an understanding of the Gospel as a message of total salvation, capable of response to the concrete problems of human life?

## **2. "We are participating within the Church in the mission of Christ" (No.11)**

The draft text of 1984 said: "Jesus himself is the Gospel" (No.9); evangelisation is a task then that is beyond our means, rooted as it is in the very mystery of Christ, who through the Spirit is present in the Church. We are now living the age of the Church, whose sacramental reality finds expression in each one of the local Churches spread among all peoples. In the end it is these Churches that are the subject of mission. The Rule recalls this in No.13: "The responsibility for carrying on Christ's mission belongs in each place to the local Church." From this we appreciate that we are servants and not masters of mission.

The way we behave with regard to the universal or the local Church is the result of these facts. Our attitude is to be at their service, in communion and in dialogue. We respect legitimate differences. The status we have as an international Congregation does not relieve us of the duty of insertion in the local Church. Quite the opposite, we do fit into this Church that welcomes us.

In No.11, the phrase "within the Church" bears two meanings, that of the Church's mediation of mission and that of the spirit of communion. Missionaries have the role of giving public witness to the universality of the faith, the inter-communion of Churches, their mutual interaction, their complementarity, the oneness of the Church amid the diversity of cultures and finally witness to their shared responsibility for



evangelisation. One of the works that is, according to No.18, specific to us in the local Church is precisely that of “awakening an understanding of the universal mission, of justice and of kinship between peoples”.

This last element in No.18 is important. Mission is a service rendered to communion even in the human sense of the term. Church (as well as our communities) has to be true witness that all people are called to be one (LG 1; No.28,1). Are not all these things necessary to us in the practice of the missionary calling: openness to the other; the willing ability to listen to the other; the acceptance of what there is of good in every human heart; an ability to rise above every prejudice against a race, or sex, or social class, or minority?

### **3. The Gospel, a force for liberation (No.16.1)**

It is not just recently that an understanding of the Gospel as a force for liberation has grown up. This idea recurs frequently in St. Paul's letters and even includes (Romans 8) the liberation of the whole of creation. Christ Himself began his mission in this sense of liberation, of “setting free” (Luke 4:18).

The post-Conciliar Church accords quite a special attention to this idea of liberation. When we take on Christ's mission, we are entering the struggle against whatever oppresses people, because the Holy Spirit, who raised Jesus, went ahead as leader into the battle against every sort of oppression.

So it is that the Rule says “we count ..... as constitutive parts” (No.14) everything that touches upon the complete liberation of people and of society. This means freeing them from sin and all its consequences. It means, because of the shared destiny of all God's children and their equal dignity, working for justice and for peace. It means too the development of human abilities and of all the resources of creation. It could be argued indeed that in the eyes of the unbeliever, the credibility of our apostolate hangs upon what we are doing to develop the world. If Christ's Good News lacks all impact upon life's problems, how is one to believe that this is

Good News of salvation? What belief can there be that Christ did rise again?

Nowhere in the Rule is the meaning of Justice and Peace clearly defined. The work it does from one place to another varies. The Rule offers us, however, two positive indications. The first is the promotion and the defence of human rights. The well-known quotation from Libermann given in No.14 expresses this. The second is what No.14.1 presupposes, the "effort to analyse situations, to lay bare the relationship of individual cases to the structural causes", leading to the transformation of the unjust structures there are in society.

The drafting of No.14.2 proved difficult in the attempts before the Chapter. Confreres manifested varied reactions to "prophetic voices". The text now recommends that we be attentive to such as they. We are to uphold them through a "process of discernment". All that No.14.2 explicitly refers to are attitudes with regard to "new apostolic initiatives". This might legitimately be extended to include the case of confreres who choose to live under politically oppressive regimes or in countries wracked by armed conflict in order to help a suffering population. Through their "apostolate of presence" they are a voice crying for justice and for peace, a prophetic voice.

In No.24 there is a suggestion that in community there be an examination of conscience as to how, inside our community, we put justice and peace into effect in our inter-personal relationships. Our pastoral work for justice and peace has to spring from each one's witness in the way he lives. The same examination of conscience ought moreover to extend to the manner in which we relate to our employees.

#### **4. "Our presence is genuine witness and service" (No.15.3)**

The quotation from Acts 1:8 placed at the beginning of Chapter 2 brings the idea of witness into the picture. Nos 15 to 17 emphasise it, putting together under the title "witnesses to the Gospel" the description of the varied forms of our apostolate (first evangelisation, service of the local Churches, inter-religion dialogue, the "inculturation" of the Gospel, ecu-

menic dialogue). All of this means that every form of missionary apostolate is marked by either explicit or implicit reference to the Risen Lord.

The worth of the missionary work being done by those who, living in situations that prevent or hinder their explicit announcing of the Gospel, nonetheless bear witness by their lives and their Christian charity, is vindicated by Nos 15 and 15.3. Our confreres who are living in Islamic countries are a case in point. An important clarification of the text as written by the General Chapter was happily a result of an intervention by the Congregation for Religious, which asked the meaning to be attributed to what the Chapter had written in No.15.3. The Holy Spirit works in the hearts of people, though our witnessing may sometimes be constrained by limits put upon it. This theme of "silent witness" (No.15.3), where circumstances do not permit the explicit proclamation of the Gospel, has been in the Rule since the 1984 draft. The importance is evident.

## **5. The poor reveal the Gospel to us (No.24.1)**

The meaning of the word "poor" in the Scriptures is given to us in Number 4 of the Rule. The "poor", in Chapter 2, are to be understood rather in a socio-economic sense: the oppressed and disadvantaged (No.12), the weak and the little ones (Nos 14 and 24.1). Our Rule affirms that it is part of our mission to set them free. No.12 underlines the fact that the poor – always in this socio-economic sense, count with us as being what "we prefer".

The poor reveal the Gospel to us; they have something to give us. They put our outlook upon life and society to the question, and our tendency towards being well-off and comfortable, even perhaps the way in which we try to relate to God. Number 24 (cf. Nos 30, 70, 71) seems to be saying that they throw fresh light, by the questions they raise, upon our very understanding of the Gospel. This means that the cry of the poor is a challenge to how objective mission is. They ensure that we take the earthly dimension, the historic sense

of the Kingdom of God into our accounting. It is a "constitutive part" of it.

To be converted to the poor necessitates very often a change of outlook: what are they going to be for us? people who repel us? objects of our commiseration or of works of mercy? people to be welcomed?

## **6. "In dialogue and mutual respect" (No.19)**

Dialogue with unbelievers and in a context of ecumenism is explicitly dealt with in Chapter 2 (No.16.3). So too are our relationships with local Churches (Nos 19 and 25.1). The same Chapter talks about these same things, more or less implicitly, when it is dealing with the meeting of the Gospel and local cultural traditions (No.16.1 and 2), a coming together that includes religious beliefs and practices.

In using the word "dialogue" then, the Rule is covering all that characterises something essential in our apostolate: respect and giving witness and listening. This is the highroad to an understanding of other people and to communion. It is essential for that respect that is the due of every human person. Even God Himself throughout the story of salvation has made contact with us along this way of dialogue. The Rule goes farther yet. In No.13.1 it names amongst "what the Church is currently stressing in mission", "mission as dialogue".

The Second Vatican Council inspired a radical change with regard to the theology of non-Christian religions. Salvation is seen to be Christ-centered, and not Church-centered. The influence of Christ impinges upon all created values and upon the Kingdom. So dialogue is no mere method for pastoral contact between religions. It is something far deeper than a listening and respectful attitude. Given that all religions carry within them salvific worth (God's Spirit having been at work since the world's creation, No.8), dialogue between religions becomes rather a mutual exchange, mutual discovery, mutual welcoming and conversion. In 1977 the Bishops of India wrote: "Dialogue is the Christian faith's response to God's saving presence in other religious traditions and a firm



statement of hope of their fulfilment in Christ". The Rule makes mention of "mission as dialogue" but offers no explanation (No.13.1). It does, however, add that we "try to accept and to make (it) our own" (Please refer to the Synods since 1971; to *Evangelii Nuntiandi*; to the papers from the Secretariat for non-Christians, from Episcopal Conferences in Asia and in North Africa).

The wider meaning given to mission in the light of dialogue and liberation is founded on the theology of the Kingdom of God. The Church is sign, seed and instrument of the Kingdom. The Spirit, however, who precedes and who exceeds the Church, is also building the Kingdom in the heart of each person of good will. The Spirit makes the Kingdom visible down through history, in the stirrings and the events of life.

In face of the division that exists between Christians we are asked by No.17 to adopt an ecumenic spirit and to work together with other Churches. Being on mission heightens our awareness of the scandal that the dividedness of Christians is and it turns us towards an ecumenic apostolate. With some, and at certain times, dialogue will not be easy. Many confreres mentioned this in the course of the various drafts and the Rule recognises the fact (No.17.1). Nonetheless, mission is a service of reconciliation and of unity: "We put our trust in the Holy Spirit, leading both us and them to the complete truth." (No.16.3).

An essential question: Does the Formation we are offering to Spiritans take account of these fresh demands that the Mission places on us?

## 7. "Under the sign of the Incarnation" (No.16)

The Rule of Life in No.13.1 speaks of "the inculturation of the Message in each local Church" and No.16 ties this into the context of the Incarnation. These taken together direct us to a theological presupposition, namely that all cultures are open to Christ and are in waiting for His Gospel. The Rule at the same time indicates an approach, the "fruitful coming together of local cultural and religious traditions with the

Gospel of Christ" as a necessary condition for authentic announcement of Jesus Christ. So it is that "we strive in every way that we can" to ensure it (No.16.1).

When the draft of 1984 was being evaluated it was found to have given but scant attention to inculturation and to dialogue. The next draft took account of this. The General Chapter wished to be still more definite regarding inculturation than the 1985 draft and so it was in Number 16, 16.1 and 16.2 of the Rule.

Inculturation is no passing pastoral fad. Rather is it demanded by truth with regard to the nature of salvation, a consequence of Incarnation and of respect for the personality of peoples. The deep meaning and the basis for this coming together are found in the Incarnation. What is at stake here is not just two cultures meeting; rather is it a coming together of the Gospel of Christ and a specific culture. What is to happen is no mere adaptation of externals but a penetration of the spirit of a people by the Gospel leaven such that their union is fruitful. Here is the reason why No.13.1 counts it among the present-day forms of mission that are part of our apostolate.

Admittedly true inculturation is a long, long process carried out for the greater part – but not exclusively – by the sons and the daughters of the country and the culture. A missionary who puts himself to the trouble can push it forward, fitting in with the people who receive him, learning the language (as No.16.2 proposes), discovering the cultural values, discovering his place in society, situating Church correctly too, abetting the efforts of the local Church.

The short phrase "we join ourselves in solidarity with" (No.16.2) may slip by without being noticed. A pity, for it is packed full of meaning and modern insight. We have to "participate in solidarity with their joys and sorrows" when we live amongst a people. Some of our Spiritan confreres have in recent years paid the supreme price, their very lives, others their well-being, in the cause of this same solidarity.

**8. "...To those who have not yet heard the Gospel message..." (No.12)**

For the confreres who made their reactions known, regarding Chapter 1 and 2 of the 1984 draft, the gravest insufficiency was in precision concerning what exactly the Spiritan calling is. It had not been clearly defined, with the result that the sections on mission could equally well have been applied to any institute whatsoever. The basis of these confreres' criticism was the lack of definition concerning first evangelisation. Or, for some of these confreres what was wrong was that the idea of "exodus" – of going out from the Church of origin – had been dropped from the definition of our mission.

A broad outline of our mission is given in Nos 4 and 12: first evangelisation, or what amounts to that, situations where there is oppression and poverty, Churches that are necessitous, work for the Church where workers are hard to find. Within this outline the Rule puts forward a variety of jobs, some of which result from the paths followed in the course of the Congregation's history, others in keeping with (No.13.1.) "what the Church emphasises in Mission". No.26 leaves open to future General Chapters the possibility of making decisions about what objectives in mission the Congregation is to have in times to come.

In fact, in the drafts that preceded the 1986 General Chapter, the broader principles that defined our mission were scattered amongst different work engagements, in the text of Chapter 2. The General Chapter assembled them in No.12, putting them in the same order as in No.4. First evangelisation is still put at the head of the list when the Rule speaks of the elements which make up the Spiritan Mission (Nos 4, 12, 15.1).

In the same redrafting all geographic or territorial definition was taken out. No longer is Spiritan mission seen as a going out from one's Church of origin, for our mission exists in every place – and this is true too even for first evangelisation. Our mission is a job that does not finish, must always be repeated, facing up all along to fresh problems. Near the end of the text in the draft, the phrase "those who are farthest

from the Church" still was there, with its geographic overtone, as some confreres pointed out, and its dubious ecclesiological sense. Despite being consecrated by tradition it was removed from No.15.1.

When we look about us, we see first evangelisation calling us to go everywhere: to the youth, with its special group culture; to the intellectual world, marked by modern thought and neopaganism. The very rate of demographic increase surpasses our ability to evangelise. There are great masses of people untouched by the Gospel – so very, very many situations that are a challenge to missionary initiative.

#### **9. "We foster the growth of young Christian communities" (No.15.2)**

Confreres who commented on the two drafts, of 1984 and 1985, expressed disquiet, asking if the fresh departures to engage ourselves elsewhere would not damage the work and presence that already existed in the local Churches. Would not this planned diversification break the follow-on of our working? The answer, particularly on the part of men who were in the Districts, to the questionnaire concerning what should be the object of our first attention (*F. priorités*), shows this also (cf. I/D No.41, April 1986, p.2).

In fact, granted the urgency of undertaking fresh sorts of apostolate, we have no intention whatever of failing in the continuation of the works that are already being carried out in the Districts with the local Churches. The General Chapter, 1980, while urging the undertaking of new things, had given as an object of first attention the continuation of our obligations in the local Churches (*Spiritan Life* 56–60). The new Rule continues in the same direction while seeking to identify a golden mean between new departures and our traditional obligations. It even points out, as a guideline for decision making, the lack there may be of workers where there are needs in the field of local Church (No.19). Every "disengagement" must be undertaken after a discernment, into which the local Church enters, when we are trying to discern whether we ought to disengage. We may well reach a deci-



sion for an urgent and renewed commitment in the very same local Church (No.25). The well-balanced decision has always to be looked for. What the Rule of Life furnishes are but the decision-making principles.

The Rule suggests but one simple reservation regarding what are called "social" and "education" apostolates, that they should be "in line with our Spiritan calling" (No.18). To elect for them and to give them a sense of direction, Nos 4 and 12 are followed, but account has got to be taken also of what No.18.1 states as something "specially important... for our times" – "youth apostolate".

**10. "...One single missionary family, ..... we take upon ourselves, in solidarity, responsibility" (No.21)**

Numbers 21 to 24 call upon us to work together in the apostolate. Each Spiritan's goals and objectives in mission are supposed to be integrated into the Congregation's. Because of our consecration we are sharing in the Church's mission, mediated to us as individuals by the Congregation (cf. No.77.1 and 77.2). Again, our apostolate bears the stamp of being Spiritan, which is where we belong (No.22).

There is a result of some importance that flows from this, namely that from the standpoint of mission, independently of whatever job may be given us, we are all on the same footing. And this on but one condition: that we be in unity with the life, the goals and the objectives (*F. projet*) of the Congregation (No.22). Also deserving of attention is the importance of our coresponsibility in mission. It is implied in the idea of "missionary family" in Nos 21 and 24.2. The Spiritan apostolate operates as Chapters 2 and 3 of the Rule explain, from the base that community maintains.

This concept of "family" gives rise to associates and fellow-workers, people who take on a fixed engagement in our living for the apostolate and in our spirituality (No.24.3). These people are not to be confused with temporary or occasional fellow workers, nor with those who may work with us without any relationship with our "family". This sort of initiative has become recognised and stable in one or more of

our Provinces. General Chapters from 1968 on have been in favour of it (see *Spiritan Life*, Nos. 101-103). And yet No.24.3 when it deals with them does not make clear their status nor the way in which they are attached to the Congregation. The Rule leaves things open for various experiments and for the experiments to mature.

Yet another two points: how does Chapter 2 situate the lay missionary? How is inculturation of the Congregation and of Spiritan living going to affect the missionary style in future Provinces of the Southern Hemisphere?

To the first question, Chapter 2 says little about the laity, referring but to our lay associates and to the formation of the laity in Churches where we are working. Yet we cannot hesitate to push for and collaborate with the lay missionary. This is something so clearly understood that it needs no saying in the Rule.

To that second question, only the future can reply. The pastoral role and the Church's mission are functions of the culture of each country. Missionary choices and how to go about them will most likely be original in these young Provinces. Is the Congregation as a whole open to accept the challenge that this is going to offer?

## Chapter 3

### COMMUNITY LIFE

#### **A. IN FRATERNAL, PRAYING RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY, TO PREACH THE GOOD NEWS.**

1. As is seen in Chapter 1, all aspects of our Spiritan calling come together in the idea that Libermann had expressed as "apostolic life". There is no precedence to be looked for as between missionary life and religious life. Our mission, continuation of the life that the Son of God lived on earth, has but a single "apostolic consecration" (see prior to this, and along the same lines, the statement in CDD No.14, of 1968). The apostolic life, in our understanding of the term, has three essential components: the announcing of the Good News, practice of the evangelical counsels and a fraternal and praying community (No.3). The Chapters that follow recall with great frequency the closeness there is between these three (e.g. Nos 27, 52, 87, etc.).

#### **2. The "reception" accorded to the Council**

The theology of the Council helps us to an even deeper understanding of the oneness of our whole life. When it meditates upon the mystery of the Church, the Council envisions it as missionary in its very nature: "light of the nations" (L.G. 22). The Church calls all members to take part in the paschal mystery, so they will come to be signs of the Kingdom and put it into effect (L.G. 22). At the same time the Council's major statements are centred on a theology of the Church as communion. The Church itself, and every Church community, is more than the structures. It is shared experiencing of Christ's death and resurrection in a communion of solidarity, of prayer, of belief and of sharing. We find, if we look, that

these two ideas of "paschal mystery" and of "communion" as a single base for the Kingdom have been woven into the texts of the Rule that treat of our religious apostolic community way of living.

### a) The paschal mystery

Not only our personal good but the well-being of the entire Church and also of the world depend upon our playing a part in the paschal mystery. What is asked of every baptised person (No.50) elicits from us quite a distinctive answer – our profession. Profession is in one and the same act a renunciation and a liberation, for the service of God and of our fellow human beings (No.53). This word "renunciation" is never to be understood in a purely personal sense. The witness or "martyrdom" that is integral to religious life is of value, above all its other significance, for "the Kingdom of God already existing and still to come" (No.52). It is a way of being helped in the following of Christ, so as to "challenge" a world that runs on selfishness and to set it free (Nos 60, 74, 82). Community living is in itself a way of gaining access to the paschal mystery, because "community living makes unremitting demands upon each member to be converted" – even "to die and rise again" (No.39.2). It is a condition that arises inevitably if we are to work together in the service of the Gospel (cf. No.29).

### b) Communion

When we take upon ourselves to become part of the paschal mystery, we are by that very fact welcoming the "Father's merciful love so as to be reconciled to Him, to the Church, to others and to our own selves" (No.95). In this way we become makers of communion. That sharing we experience in our *community living* helps us learn how practically to live oneness amidst differences in keeping with the Spirit of Pentecost (No.37). In turn this results in our being accessible to broader sorts of communion: with local Church and its variety of community structures (No.31), with the Church in its entirety (No.81), with the quest that is ecumenism (No.17). The various sorts of solidarity there are within the Congregation are also expressions of this spirit of communion (Nos 21,



36, 68.1, 72.4). We thus go deeper and deeper into the Church's mission "to gather together in unity the scattered children of God (John 11:52)..." (No.28). We gain an ability to draw close to the "little ones", to promote a world of justice and of peace (Nos 30, 16.2, 70). In the same way our *religious life* contributes to communion, through promoting God's love, of which it is a sign (No.53), and each one of our vows makes us ever more available for the Spirit, in the cause of the Kingdom of communion, the hope of the "poor" (Nos 60, 70, 75, 77). At the centre of our life "sign of unity and bond of charity" (Sac. Con. 47) the Eucharist builds up our fraternal communion in the Body of Christ. "In the Eucharist Christ's Paschal Mystery is made present" (No.93).

## **B. OUR LIVING IN COMMUNITY**

The Chapter on community life is not to be seen apart from the one on religious life, to which it imparts, in fact, the whole dimension "of the Church". It is by our belonging to the Spiritan Community, itself in turn at the service of local Churches and of the universal Church, that this "ecclesial dimension" is given to our religious life.

### **1. Communities for apostolate**

In keeping with the orientation of the Rule as a whole, our community living is modelled before all else on "Jesus with His apostles" (No.33). "He appointed twelve; they were to be His companions and to be sent out to preach" (Mk 3:13-14). The General Chapter expressly positioned this quotation before Acts 2:42 so that in the very heart of our calling to be apostles there should be placed witness to the communion of Christians. Our calling to be apostles necessitates the sharing there is in community as a specific and "essential" element (No.28). It is interesting to remark the importance given to community all down the tradition of the Congregation's apostolate. Poullart des Places founded a seminary because it seemed to him to be an impossibility that young men should get ready to be priests and to be apostles with no foundation in community. Libermann, who was alerted by the failure

that had been the experience of many missionaries (notably Spiritans), made community living one of the first laws of his young Congregation: "Its members shall all live in community at all times" (No.27). Moreover he laid it down as a basic condition for the Fusion with the Spiritans.

## **2. What sorts of communities?**

If we set off from the statement that the apostolic life is the "goal" of our community life (No.27) we shall be obliged, in order to construct our various types of community, to keep a number of criteria that are linked with the goal before us as we go along.

### **a) The criterion of sharing**

A basic degree of sharing is necessary for us to travel in the direction of "perfection" of our apostolate (No.27). Because "it is not we who give ourselves a mission" (No.77.1), we are working together in the service of the Gospel (No.29). In order to share the belief that we hold, we experience a need to meet together in prayer (No.44.3), in drawing our values from the Word of God and in celebrating the Eucharist together (No.35). We learn by experience the necessity of our drawing close together because "each one stands in need of help and support so that the progress made extends to all" (No.39.2). This sharing presupposes also that there be the service provided by authority "because it is a force for unity" (No.46), and it helps each one "to respond faithfully to (his) calling" to the mission service and "to lead a joyful fraternal life" (No.47).

This principle of sharing is what comes closest to being the essence of our community living. It is always possible and so very easy to delude oneself and to keep more or less happy with good intentions. Community living, like every love life, necessitates practical actions, signs of sharing that give proof that the love life is growing, through all the difficulty and the happiness: "Time is needed for growing to take place. Community living makes unremitting demands upon each member to be converted – even to "die and rise again"

(No.39.2). On this level of the everyday, the Rule of Life goes farther than any preceding draft, all of which could be said to have smacked too greatly of an idealistic outlook. The Rule states precisely what has to be done to give expression to Spiritan community living, what is indispensable in any Spiritan community whatever. Spiritan community living supposes

- a superior;
- regular and frequent meeting with other Spiritans;
- sharing of goods and of leisure;
- community discernment regarding the work involvements;
- whatever be necessary for replenishing spiritual, physical and moral energies (No.32.1).

It is easy to see that this list is exacting and puts every one of our communities to the question. By times, the members of a Chapter draw back from passing an article couched in such terms, because many of our communities are a long way from the ideal that is laid down. What, we may well ask, would a “Rule of Life” have come to if it did but describe the facts that exist and not put forward an ideal to be realised once the apt means to its attainment should have been proposed?

### **b) The criterion of apostolic situations**

Our Congregation’s history bears witness that the actual conditions of mission situations have had an effect upon the character of our communities. Libermann did think of there being different sorts of community, as his experience of mission evolved (cf. Provisional Rule and the Rule of 1849). The Rule asks us now to take account of the local context in our deciding what the ideal community may be in one place or another (No.151). The Spiritan community “maintains the closest contact with its surroundings and in a very special sense with the “little ones”” (No.30). At the same time “Our Spiritan community is part of a wider community – the local Church, with which it lives in communion” (No.31). This communion and all that is done as service for mission require a presence and a sharing that are capable of being in conflict with one or another way of community living (small, bigger, local or “regional”, exclusively Spiritan or other). It is not the force of habitual ways, nor again the strength of any one

principle or several principles, that assists us in making a choice; it has to be done through a genuine discernment process. That alone is a method that will allow us to reconcile the demands of an apostolate and those of our Spiritan community sharing. Simultaneously discernment facilitates a mutual enrichment of both community and apostolate by the way of living it engenders.

### **c) The criterion of differences in culture**

The surroundings in which we grow to adulthood necessarily exert an influence upon our conception of community. Community is an idea that we learn more and more of through what we live in our Congregation, a Congregation of ever greater "internationality" and of a diversity of cultures that keeps on growing. "Nearness to the poor" will have a different echo for someone if he is Latin American, or African, or European. The same is true concerning the family, sharing of possessions, prayer or recreation or leisure time. What is there to be said concerning things like diet and so many other small things which in fact are of major importance in the life of any community? In all this there is a discernment to be done, so that our communities grow, guarding unity in their differences, and respecting certain limits lest they be led to breakdown. Attentiveness to the culture criterion necessitates also that the style of life our communities select be "understandable" in the situation where they are living. It is all part of witness and thus of our apostolic life. This is the meaning of what our Rule says when it speaks of "mutual enrichment" flowing from the acceptance of our cultural differences once accepted as "a positive factor" (No.37), in relations between us ourselves and also between the community and the Churches (No.31).

## **3. Regional community (32.1, 153.2)**

The Regional Community had been recognised already in the Chapter of 1968: "However, the needs of the apostolate very often require the confreres to live in small groups or



even alone (residences or stations). In order that they may benefit from the advantages of true community life, they are attached to a centre where this community life can flourish. They thus form a regional community" (CDD 253). Such a community presupposes structures that should be "sufficiently flexible" (CDD 255), nonetheless allowing for the introduction "into the life of missionaries ... the unity and harmony which the Council desires for the personal and pastoral life of its apostles (CDD 254, Pres. Ord. 14, Perf. Car. 15)".

In the papers from the General Chapter 1974, precapitular paper 31 was the occasion for doing a stocktaking on the experimentations that had been attempted. Some showed very positive results. Yet there had also been attempts that had come to nothing and very many failures. In the runup to the General Chapter of 1986 there were many who saw in the regional community an opportunity for restoring the apostolic commitment in our communities. There were others who questioned if regional community had not been used as a camouflage for calling occasional meetings and a sharing that hardly existed "community living". Be it said at once, however, that local community can serve just as well as a cover-up for rampant individualism.

To that extent alone to which it is faithful to the regulations that are enumerated in No.32.2 of the Rule of Life, can the Regional community be a Spiritan community. Putting together a regional community and keeping it going asks of all its members a very, very strong community spirit. The regulations that the Rule imposes facilitate the realisation of that community spirit and serve to ensure that this form of community shall have a future. Observance, by local communities, of the very same regulations will ensure their permanent vitality.

It is to be noted that the "isolated confrere" no longer exists. The acceptance of the regional community by the Rule and its setting up will ensure this. From now on every single confrere is member either of a local or a regional community (No.32.1).

#### 4. The community *projet* (Nos 44.3, 99)

The community *projet* ought to be one of the best tonics for our life in community and be taken by all of our communities, of whatever sort. What the word *projet* takes for fact is that the life of the community is dynamic and capable of evolving, that it is on the way to a destination that it keeps ever in mind and that is proper to this community alone. What the word community, here, takes for granted is that the *projet* is a fruit of the input and participation of all members of the community. Everything that goes into the working out of one of these *projets* is set down in the "Guide for the renewal of community" that was published by the Generalate for the General Chapter 1986 (No.29). (In French only. No English version has yet appeared).

1. The *projet* sets down in the first place what the "mission" of the community is; what the objectives of that mission are; who it is to; how the activities of all the members fit into the overall objective; the means to be used; how the tasks are divided out; what collaboration is needed.
2. Next, the *projet* defines the lifestyle of the community, one that corresponds to the mission of the community; the occasions and the themes of community reflexions – prayer, retreats, celebrations, etc.; the length and the frequency of the different sorts of community meetings; recreation and leisure activities; the reception of guests and people invited to the community, etc.
3. The community *projet* ought also to make provisions that facilitate the on-going formation of the members of the community, in matters of professional updating and renewal in the fields of theology, spirituality, liturgy, Sacred Scripture, pastoral theology, etc.
4. The community *projet* also decides precisely in what way the community relates to, and maintains its solidarity with, the Congregation as a whole, with the local Church, civil authority, and the whole neighbourhood.
5. Finally, it is important that the community *projet* should define clearly the style of *animation* of the community, laying down the role to be taken by the superior, the com-

munity council and every single member of the community. Within this there is specified how the different meetings of the community are to be “animated”, and the check-up method for the regular evaluation of the community *projet*.

The Rule of Life provides the coordinates to be used in mapping out and setting up the *projet* – the Rule, that is, as it is accepted by the Chapters with whatever changes may come about. It is easily seen that every single one of the points enumerated above is to be found in the Rule in one way or another.

## 5. The meaning of “belonging to” the Congregation

Many different articles of the Rule mention the practices by which we are to express our “belonging to” the Congregation. Numbers 33 to 44 are worthy of attention for this reason. It is not just an idea of *esprit de corps* in a restricted sort of meaning, rather a kind of loving attachment and preference for the confreres that are “received from the Lord” (No.34) and the calling that we share. This carries over into our daily living out of the *cor unum et anima una*. On this topic one might look up what Libermann has to say in the *Glose*, about p.125 of the French text.

## 6. The service of authority

Each member, as we saw in No.29, shares in the apostolic life that is common to all. Certain words touch key ideas that mark all Spiritan living – co-responsibility, collegiality, participation, subsidiarity. As the Second Vatican Council has done, so we too have chosen to move away from an idea of authority that would be hierarchic or authoritarian. There have been historical examples where that sort of thing all but wrecked the Congregation. Even Libermann, despite a conception of authority that is very centralised, had written into his rule a description of the superior that is quite open to the idea of servant/superior: watchful for each one, a real listen-

er, never wanting to push anyone about, always in favour of partnership.

Before the General Chapter there had been quite a few discussions in an effort to decide clearly what our notion of authority-as-service was to be. What was it that community stood in need of from a Superior? Was it an *animateur* who facilitated the working out of a consensus? This was the idea in the draft of 1984. The fact of the matter is that "among the services necessary to life in community, authority holds a special place. This is because it is a force for unity" (No.46). The Superior is the *animateur* who stirs up dialogue and consensus (No.48), but in a special way gives the example of that love Jesus had for his "friends" (No.49) and in doing this his service is at the same time that of the Shepherd. Again, he helps the community to "respond faithfully to its calling" (No.47). It is he who bears the responsibility in all things, even making the decisions (No.48), notwithstanding his role of helping every individual member to be "coresponsible" (No.49).

Because it deals both with community and with the service of authority, it should have been logical that what became Chapter 7 remain part of Chapter 3, as it is concerned with management and organisation. The Congregation is in fact one big community, and it is important that each single member be conscious of his part in the *animation* of the whole Institute. The Carcavelos Text meeting did try to weave these two chapters into a unity, and in that they were trying to imitate Libermann's Rule faithfully. Whichever approach is taken, there is bound to be a huge number of Articles dealing with Government. To try putting the complete treatment into one chapter would have swelled it out of all proportion. The whole dynamic capability of a chapter on community would have been lost. In the end the two chapters have been kept separate. Yet the basic principles of authority are stated in the chapter on community, Chapter three. We may, in fact, regard these two chapters as but a single unit.



## Chapter 4

### RELIGIOUS LIFE

#### 1. Disciples and witnesses

The Rule, in keeping with what the Second Vatican Council teaches, places our life as religious in the context of baptism (No.50). All the baptised in fact have this calling of disciple and the other one of witness of the Kingdom of God.

As a disciple, the person who is baptised is called "to the fulness of love and holiness" and as a witness, to profess the Faith, to live in communion and at the service of love "in the world". And still our calling "to the religious apostolic way of life is a special gift of the Holy Spirit" (No.51). This means that by the act of profession that religious life entails, we enter a radical way of following Christ and of "witness to the Kingdom of God, already existing and still to come" (No.52).

The Rule does not hesitate to call what we do a "consecration". Not however in the sense of being cut off from the world, but rather with the idea that the Holy Spirit calls us and sets us apart to carry on Christ's mission.

There is in our life the very same unity there was in the life of Christ, encompassing the two dimensions that were revealed at His Baptism as they were throughout His life: He lived in the Father's presence and simultaneously among men, a life that was "for God" and "for the sake of the Good News".

We must not lessen the aspect of "adoration" that there is in our religious life (No.53); it is the central fact of our existence, a wonderment that God is present to us, which is the reason for all we do – our taking of the vows, our lifelong homecoming towards the Father, in Christ's company, along with all our brothers and sisters of every people.

## **2. In the Church**

There is in the two first articles of the Chapter on Religious Life, a reference to Church (Nos 51 and 52). This results directly from the fact that our calling is rooted in our baptism. In the first instance, the Church is the assembly in Christ and around Him of all who have been baptised. It is in the Church that we each live the mystery of Christ. As Christ's living body, the Church as a unity is sent to men and women in this age. Religious are called within the Church specifically to highlight those values that are the most radical ones in the Faith. This is the meaning of saying that the service they discharge within the Church is "prophetic". If the entirety of the Church ought be the universal sacrament of salvation, there is need that some of the baptised, in keeping with their various proper callings, constitute the particular signs of one or other radical Gospel value. Founders of religious institutes have been entrusted with the calling of discharging this Church service, in their own persons and in the persons called to follow them.

We may then make the claim that the purpose of our Congregation answers to one particular duty there is within the Church, and does so before all who are baptised. Not without cause does the Church, and through her all the baptised, claim an interest in our Rule of Life, which is in no sense a private document.

As for each of us personally, we are to do our missionary duty and at the same time recall to our fellow-baptised that they too have a duty to do missionary service.

## **3. A betrothal (No.54)**

The Church is the People of God moving along, "with whom He has made an alliance and whom He has progressively taught" (LG 9). Because the religious life is based directly upon baptism it takes its place in the very foundations of the People of God, prior to any divisions of God's people into categories such as ministries, the plain faithful, the laity, and it is for this reason that one speaks no longer of the "states of perfection". It is at the most basic level a betrothal and so has to be kept up and made steadily, daily more per-

fect. In its very essence then our calling is a perpetual challenge.

The characteristic engagement of our religious apostolic life is well brought out by the way the Rule keeps referring to "God's gift", the "giving of one's self". In the first place the initiative in giving gifts rests with God. He it was who gave us His Son, pledge of His love (No.56) and who sends us out to preach a salvation that is a "gift from God" (No.11). Every facet of the calling that is ours, the way we share, the way we love, our practice of chastity in the single state (Nos 39, 60), the discernment that operates our obedience (No.76), the way our life of prayer resonates all through our apostolic activities (No.86), all these are gifts from the Holy Spirit. In the same movement we take all our confreres to be gifts that God sends to us (Nos 34, 103). And then also, the "total giving of our own self" (Nos 5, 10, 51, 54), is a fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit in us in tandem with our own disposition of being available.

#### **4. Varied practice of religious life**

The General Chapter added an article to the Rule to speak about inculturation of our religious living. This had not appeared in any preparatory document (No.55).

This inculturation follows along the same lines as the inculturation of the Christian life itself. It is a condition for the building up of Christ's Body in all the different members that form it. Every type of religious living that exists already inevitably bears the features of the culture where it arose. This has to be kept in mind should one think of offering a practice of religious life to people of a different culture. The form of religious life that is so proposed has got to adapt itself to values and to exigencies that are new to it. Our Rule includes directives that indicate how the unity of Spiritan religious living is to be adapted to the membership in its variety.

#### **5. The single state and chastity**

From the outset confreres had been emphatic that the presentation of chastity in the new Rule of Life should be

positive. Chastity for religious is a way of loving, as Christ loved. "Such was the love He had that it led Him to give His life" (No.56). This loving is both the source and the fruit of salvation. It is for this reason that "Chastity for the Kingdom" gets first mention in the three vows.

It has to be said that the General Chapter hesitated for a really long time concerning the choice of vocabulary. Everyone who is baptised is called to live chastely. There is a chastity proper to the married state too. Would it not be clearly better to speak about a vow "of celibacy", meaning to remain single or unmarried "for the sake of the Kingdom"? Is not this precisely what we do? Finally, at the insistence of the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (CRSI), the word "chastity" was inserted. As in the case of Poverty and of Obedience, reference is made to a "counsel" that every baptised person must follow in living. This is clarified and defined (No.57) by the Rule, which says that the chastity we live is that of the single person. Chastity that is lived "in celibacy" – as the expression is – is deeply marked by the apostolic nature of our calling. It is noticeable that all the Numbers in the Rule that speak of our celibacy have reference to the apostolate. The apostolic meaning of our celibacy can be understood in its twin aspects:

- as a "sign". The way in which we live is a "sign of the love of Christ amidst His disciples" (No.59.2) or again a "challenge" to "everything that would evaluate love at less than its true worth" (No.60);
- as giving to us an "availability", a freedom and a lack of selfseeking in the service of the Kingdom (Nos 56, 60).

What our Rule points to is a way of living our chastity that is well-balanced and that permits personal growth. A fraternal life, friendships, reliance on God are all needed. So also are prudence and asceticism (Nos 58, 59).

## 6. Poverty

Poverty should be related to the "purpose" of the Congregation, which is (No.4) the evangelisation of the "poor". We are supposed to live out our mission as Christ lived His; we continue that poverty that is in the mystery of the incarna-



tion. We follow after Him who made Himself poor for us "so as to enrich us from His poverty" (2 Cor.8:9).

Christ's poverty, or the *kenosis* of the Servant, is to be understood in a context of solidarity, of "identification" with people and in a special way those who are the poorest (No.61). It lies, truly, close to the heart of our apostolic mission. Additionally to those things that are common to all religious poverty (much of this section is a direct application of Canon Law), our living of poverty has a certain style that is Spiritan:

- In No.70, poverty is spoken of as "a sign of the coming of a new world of sharing and of justice", where the poor will no longer be oppressed by the rich. This sign value demands certain practical steps, internally both in the whole Congregation and in every community and externally also towards the poor, the less well off and the homeless "to improve their circumstances in the world" and "to change unjust social structures which victimise them" (No.71). Our understanding of poverty means too that Justice and Peace is a vital aspect of our Spiritan living and a criterion according to which we decide upon our choice of works (cf I/D 42).
- Our poverty asks us to "take root" among the people to whom we go and so "to accept cultural uprooting" and the lack of security which are a result of this for us (No.70.2). Indeed this sort of "poverty" is really part of the Spiritan tradition.
- Poverty makes of "simplicity" a really integral part of our way of living and of our hospitality (No.71). Libermann used to say that our poverty gave us a great freedom in our ministry and also that it makes it so much the more easy for people to approach us with confidence (cf. *Glose*, French text p.62).

## 7. Obedience

By obedience we become one with Christ, who is come on earth to fulfil His mission, the mission received from the Father. It is indeed "availability" in order to live the apostolic life under the Spirit's guidance (Nos 75, 76). In order to lay the foundation of our obedience, the first two numbers make explicit reference to the Trinity.

Our obedience for mission is necessarily a living reality. If it is to remain faithful it ought be a sort of permanent "discerning of the signs of the times", which at times takes us "where we would rather not go" (No.76).

Again we are reminded by the Rule that no one chooses a mission for himself (No.77.1). It is interesting to remark that the "evangelical reading" of the signs of the times or of the appeals that the people among whom we work make to us, constitute for the Rule the more important points of reference with regard to obedience (No.77). The entire Spiritan community, the Superior and the members, seeks in the first place to put itself in a state of obedience with regard to this mission.

In our community discernment there are two important points to be recalled and Nos 78 and 80 state them. Indeed these two numbers are crucially important. We choose at the time of being professed to follow faithfully in all that the Congregation shall decide towards attaining its apostolic objectives. The Congregation's life and its mission fit into the life and the mission of the Church. So making reference to local Church covers our availability to the local and to the entire Church as well as to the Pope, servant to the unity of all Churches.

The CRSI asked that reference be explicit to our obedience to the Pope in virtue of Religious profession. We put it in in the context of our belief in the Mystery of the Church (No.81).

## **Chapter 5**

### **SPIRITAN PRAYER**

#### **1. Why a separate Chapter?**

The fact that a special Chapter on prayer was written into the Rule should be seen for what it is. It does not mean that prayer is a separate something, a reality off on its own, in our life. Neither does it imply that prayer is a set of exercises to be repeated in addition to or apart from our life in the apostolate. The opening articles show that our entire apostolic life is prayer (No.72) and that our apostolic life and our prayer are to be thought of as things that complement each other (No.76), whatever may be the stresses that exist sometimes or all the time between prayer and activity (No.77). The purpose of this Chapter 5 is to help us to act well in the apostolic life we are living.

Again in this Chapter there is a wish to avoid any sort of regimentation of our prayer, while insisting at the same time that there have got to be a certain fixed number of times and occasions specifically devoted to prayer (Nos 97 to 99).

The centre stage in our prayer is held by the Liturgy: the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours (Nos 97–99). There was often in the drafting a great anxiety to unite personal prayer and community prayer; Scripture reading (No.92); prayer jointly with our “family” or with other persons (No.99.10); devotional practices (No.99.11); the conversion experience that a retreat is (No.96) and also the Sacrament of Reconciliation (No.95).

#### **2. Contemplative prayer and practical union**

It is laid down in the Rule that each one “shall set aside at least half an hour” of his time each day for prayer (No.91). There will be many confreres likely to find this an unrealistic

demand. Yet, why not look at it as an occasion for each of us to check the basic choices we are making as we live. What carries the traditional name of contemplation, is time freely given over to God in an attitude of being at His disposition. Prayer in this sense allows us the chance to renew our enthusiasm for God, to live mission not just as a human relationship of one creature with another, albeit one of love, but as the love of God for people.

Libermann's expression "practical union" has a far, far deeper sense than the mere idea that one keeps God in mind in the midst of activities. It is rather a way of expressing a permanent disposition, a "state" in us that comes from being at the beck and call of the Holy Spirit even in the smallest thing. It is apprenticeship in spiritual poverty, an ever more and more complete putting of our self into the hands of God. If we allow ourselves to be led and set free by the Spirit of God, as all who are truly poor do, then more and more frequently will the Lord come to stay with us. He will break into our life in moments of failure or depression, by entering with our joys and elations when we are with the poor who are "evangelising" us. These are the moments when we shall experience this practical union, which is one of the joys of life as a missionary. It is a perfect state that we enter little by little, it is a destination in the direction of which we should steadfastly strive.

### **3. The Holy Spirit and Mary**

The chapter on prayer refers very frequently to the Holy Spirit as the originator of our life in the apostolate. The same chapter names Mary as "our model of willing obedience and of faithfulness" (Nos 89, 6). The confreres had been specially insistent upon the importance of the link between Mary and the Holy Spirit. That is why the section "With Mary" comes immediately after the one on the Holy Spirit. Poullart des Places and Libermann have left us teaching that urges us to listen both to the Holy Spirit and to Mary.

When the Incarnation – of which our apostolate is but the continuation – began in time, the initiative came from the



Holy Spirit and was welcomed by Mary. Our missionary life will bear fruit in the measure that we put ourselves as did Mary in readiness to be "moved by the Spirit" (Nos 85, 89). The Chapter also held on to the traditional name of the Congregation "of the Holy Spirit under the protection of the Immaculate Heart of Mary" (No.2). The usage of the word "heart" here is in the scriptural sense of the person's entire personality, which in Mary's case was put at the disposition of her Son's apostolic mission. It is in the same sense that our Marian devotion is deeply apostolic. The presence of Mary goes from the original moment of her Son's mission on earth, through the seeming failure of the cross and on to the fulfillment of the birth of the Church at Pentecost.

We might say too that the same "heart" of Mary is an evocation for us of a spiritual poverty by which effectively we are rendered "close" to the poor and become united with them in solidarity.

Finally, "heart" underlines for us that the first thing is never "action for action's sake", rather the first thing is the heart of the matter, the presence of God, so that we are ever "before Him" while being ever "with men". This is the sole way we can truly understand what we are doing.

## Chapter 6

### FORMATION

The world and society have known deep changes in the course of recent decades. The Church community and institutions have been shaken and quite altered by the impact of these changes; yet during the same period the Church has also experienced a reinvigorating dynamism. It has renewed itself interiorly. It has changed its outlook on the world. Other ideas about the role of the Christian (priest, religious or lay person) within the Church and in mission have been born. Mission itself is a reality that is in the full flow of change with, on the one hand, the growth to maturity of local Churches everywhere in the world and on the other, a change in the "centre of gravity" of the Church from the north towards the south.

In such times it is inevitable that the formation function within an institute like ours should also experience deep change. Chapter 6 of our Rule has tried to take account of all these events.

#### 1. The text of Chapter 6

The milestones which marked the stages in the drawing up of this Chapter before the General Chapter were the Assembly of Carcavelos (at the end of 1983) and the meeting of the editing committee in Rome, March 1985. The provisional texts of 1984 and 1985 come from these meetings.

The Carcavelos assembly had to consider the first draft of the Rule. It was decided to rework it, whilst preserving all the good in it. In Chapter 6, in addition to matters of law, certain pre-Carcavelos ideas are still there in the final text, e.g. formation understood as a dynamic growing, as the

action of the Holy Spirit in us; formation as both a common and a personal task; the ideas of "internationality" and of the two stages of formation. However, at Carcavelos, the whole Chapter was remodelled and with addition of new elements, given a new orientation.

The editing committee which the Assembly had named met at Chevilly, to improve the wording of the text, respecting the intentions of the Assembly and taking into account the amendments that had been accepted by vote.

This Chapter was to be still further improved later on but the greater part of the propositions of the 1984 draft is to be found in the text passed by the General Chapter. These are: the purposes of the two stages of formation; a missionary orientation in studies; the period of missionary experience during formation; a common basic formation for both Brothers and candidates for the priesthood; "internationality"; the spiritual dynamic of response to God's call and the idea of Christ the apostle as our model. Certain passages in the present text follow word for word or almost so, those of the 1984 text, for example Nos 126, 133, 135, 142.

The critical evaluation of the original texts brought about some enrichment. Certain matters could now, thanks to the input from the confreres, be more precisely defined. Among these one may mention the goals of the novitiate experience and of the first period of formation; "internationality"; the job of the team that is working in concert with those in formation; formation for community living.

The 1985 draft reordered the contents and was a more profound treatment, which provided the working text which the General Chapter would finish and in some sections perfect.

The last stage was the passage through the CRSI. They insisted that all sections dealing with matter treated by Canon Law become Constitutions; that some points touching Canon Law be made more precise; that directors of novices be not only finally professed but be members of the Congregation (Spiritans); that should a member use a personally written wording in making profession, the text be approved by the major superior, who shall be named also in the formula; that

members be perpetually professed prior to reception of the diaconate (No.134); that there be a time of "pre-novitiate" (No.108); that the canonical enquiry before ordination be done by the major superior; that the major superior sign the dismissorial letters; that the treatment of religious profession mention explicitly the Church's mediating role and also "consecration" (dedication) to God; that also in the context of profession (No.129) the duties taken on by the one professed be mentioned.

## **2. Theological presuppositions**

When the early drafts were being considered several conferees mentioned that "theologising elaborations" ought to be avoided. Of course a religious rule of life is founded upon what are necessarily concepts in theology, nowhere more clearly than when treating of the theology of spirituality. However the basis in doctrine of the directions being adopted had to be spelled out and at the same time, the treatment kept brief and complete.

Often then you have to read between the lines and expand upon key words in order to discover the doctrinal background of the Rule. We think that the following headings express the main elements of the plan, from a theological point of view.

### **a) "Until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19)**

These "Christological" facets of both our formation and calling which are termed "essential" are stated in but few words in No.101; to follow after Christ as did the apostles and to imitate his apostolic character. Both the fine quotations that are at the beginning of Chapter 4 join to this the idea of vital growing through belief and love, and the idea of communion.

There is a special nuance for us in the words with which the Vatican Council treats of religious life, the "following of Christ". The Rule employs this in Nos 101, 102 and 104. Looked at in the light of Spiritan "apostolic living" and taking No.33 also into consideration, in the Spiritan Rule "to follow



Christ" means imitating his radical approach not only to life, but also to mission. The primary model for community living for Spiritans is that of Jesus' apostolic community with his apostles. Again, the word "disciples" bears a more profound connotation than mere "learning from a teacher". In the scriptural sense, it denotes a relationship of communion and it is precisely this usage that is employed here, for our discipleship must be such as to allow our apostolic activities to be attributable to Christ Himself (No.101).

#### **b) Formation "under the influence of the Holy Spirit".**

There are but three references in Chapter 6 to the Holy Spirit. They are, however, of great significance. The definition of formation is given as "continual deepening of our apostolic life under the influence of the Holy Spirit" (No.100). Candidates are helped "to respond freely ... to the call of the Holy Spirit" (No.104). The novice, "attentive to the Holy Spirit...(is enabled) to deepen...the grace of vocation that he has received" (No.110). As the Rule expresses it, the dynamic aspect of our vocation moves under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The central position, in both our moral and spiritual life, is held by our relationship with the Holy Spirit. This arises from the fact that we pay particular attention to the Holy Spirit and this distinguishes Spiritan relationship with God. The expression of this relationship comes from within our very selves, "from the heart". To neglect the Spirit is to fall into merely formal and exterior observance. The Rule, conscious of this danger, is at pains to ensure that those who are charged with direction in formation should pay it particular attention.

This work of spiritual direction had already received mention in the 1984 draft, albeit in a cursory way. The 1985 draft was made more definite in response to requests from several members. In 1985 it is made applicable to both stages of formation, the initial and novitiate, and even to the period of first moves and decisions about vocation (Nos 104, 107, 110.1, 121.1). The General Chapter in the end, and at the request once more of several, "earnestly exhorted" all "to

look for the support of a spiritual counsellor capable of helping" all through their lives. That the Spirit acts, does not excuse us from action. Our part is above all to listen to the Spirit and by a discernment process, to hear the calls he makes to the one who takes counsel.

This is how, living "in the Spirit", by his gifts and the effects of his presence, our lives are changed and we find "a source of both human and spiritual maturity" (No.86).

Since our Rule relates vocation to Holy Spirit, the risk of "spiritualism" is avoided. No.142 recalls that we are at the service of God's Kingdom "in the world and in the Church". Formation is to be sensitive to the Spirit. It will serve then to make us responsive to the "present needs of the world" (No.100). Ongoing formation helps us to "discernment of the signs of the times and the changes of attitudes and of outlook that are imperative" (No.142.2).

### **c) Formed for the Mission**

In Chapter 6 the master idea is the mission of Christ continuing in the Church. In four highly significant instances the Spiritan "apostolic life" idea is quoted (Nos 100, 110.3, 127 and 136.1), an idea that originates in Christ's mission continuing in the Church and which is central to formation and the pledged service of our vows. When the Rule gives a definition of formation as continual deepening of our "apostolic life" (No.100), what is implied is that the three layers of our calling (dedication/consecration, community and mission) are the central object of Spiritan formation. The final objective is mission.

The General Chapter was impelled to making explicit the import of the phrase "consecration to the apostolate" (No. 130) by the fact first, that mission is the final objective and second, mission and consecration/dedication form a unity. This use of the phrase was in the 1985 draft at the request of several members. It had been used in 1968, 1969 (CDD 13,27). The 1986 General Chapter chose to reserve this expression to perpetual vows (definitive profession) (see No.133 as well as the sub-title of this section). To draw attention to this choice of the Chapter of 1986 and in the same line, the General Coun-

cil has put this clarification in brackets in No.130 of the Rule. This explanation reflects the idea of totality that there is in both the word "consecration/dedication" and the phrase "perpetual vows (definitive profession)". The phrase is more defined now than in 1968 but the significance is deeper.

Several practical conclusions flow from the fact that mission is the master idea in formation. These are mentioned in the Rule:

- the study of theology shall be marked by the fact that we have a missionary objective. Notice that in No.140 the word "integrate" is emphatic. It is as if our study of theology were dough into which for leaven we put mission;
- a period of missionary experience, during formation, is a decisive component the better to get the young members, professed or not, ready for Spiritan apostolic life (No. 136.1);
- some apostolic activity, which has to be fitting and progressive, should be integrated into every stage of formation (No.136). It is a question here not of mere apprenticeship in pastoral skills but rather personal commitment, here and now, to a missionary activity within the Christian community of which one happens to be part;
- candidates whether to the priesthood or Brotherhood, undertake an adequate preparation for a fruitful apostolate, in keeping with the local and overall plans of the Institute. This "in keeping with" is expressed in No.137 which states that Spiritans get ready for their apostolate "in accord with" their own major superior;
- the vocations' ministry is a missionary service, a work of our Spiritan vocation, exercised in the local Church (No.107).

#### **d) Church as background**

Our collective and our personal Spiritan vocation are "ecclesial" (No.142). We are called by Christ or by God (Nos 100, 104) to carry on the mission of Christ within the Church. Behind these statements lies a theology of Church-communion, Church as sacrament of Christ. Upon this basis, Chapter 6 wishes us to think about love of the Church, and within this framework, love of the Congregation.

Formation for living in community can be dealt with on the same basis, since the community that is experienced by those who are professed to live in a community is "ecclesial".

Love of the Church, local Church in the first instance, is an integral part of our missionary spirituality. When the Rule deals with vocations' ministry, it does so in the context of local Church, seeing this ministry as being carried on in a spirit of Church communion (No.107). Local Church is the first witness of our profession (No.125). By Church mediation (No.129) we are consecrated to God. The Rule states moreover that the Church frames our entire calling as missionaries (No.142), and from the very beginnings in the novitiate, religious life is to be presented to the novice according to the mind of the Church and in keeping with the Congregation's present-day conception of it (No.110.3). The feeling that we have of belonging to the Congregation is part of our love of the Church. In other words love of the Church is made actual for us in our devotedness to the Congregation as well as in our understanding that we share in local and universal Church in communion. Our calling within the Church and in the world, in other words, our being consecrated to the mission of Christ in the Church (No.142), makes of us members in the Spiritan family (No.129, 133).

The importance of our community living, which is of the essence of apostolic life (cf. No.101), arises too from this spirit of communion that is proper to the Church. Communities of ecclesial witness are not just a prop for our private lives as Christians, rather are they primarily "mystery" of communion in Christ and evidence of brotherhood (No.28.1).

Training for community living is of such import that it must be taken seriously; on this the Rule is unambiguous. Even if, when treating novitiate, the Rule says only that community living "supports" the novice as he "(deepens) the grace of vocation he has received" (No.110), when the Rule deals with initial formation as a whole, it says that it is lived in community (No.104). Community is not simply a framework or scaffolding for formation. The lived experience and the witness value of true consecrated community form part of the very dynamism of formation (No.104).



On the practical level the Rule states that training in community living, as a function of the full development of an individual's human gifts, begins before the novitiate (No.108), is carried deeper during it (No.110.3) and is completed by a period living in a community where members are not all of the same culture (Nos 141, 141.1).

### **e) The Spiritan, open to sharing and to dialogue**

The ideal Spiritan, as envisaged by Chapter 6, is a person with a spirit of communion. As such, he is open to dialogue and sharing. The formation proposed here favours his progress towards this ideal. Spiritan formation, by so doing, works in favour of "internationality".

"Internationality" formation is not new to the Congregation. Comments originating from the Foundations and individual younger members helped insistence upon it to pass into the Rule. The same motivation clarified the meaning of "internationality" as an openness to "inter-culturality". The 1984 draft simply stated without any elaboration that formation prepares for "internationality". The 1985 draft said that formation prepares for "intercultural encounter and for internationality". The Rule (No.141) is even more blunt; formation is to get members ready both for communities and situations that are "intercultural". The reason this is necessary is our calling to missionary work in an epoch that is aware of the worth of all cultures. A further reason is that to work as a missionary one must be inculturated. A capacity to meet the other and his culture is an objective of basic formation. It is significant that the Rule, in No.136.1, puts "intercultural encounter" and "Spiritan apostolic life" together.

The Rule proposes as means to this end the period of missionary experience that is part of formation, the learning of a useful foreign language, as well as an unspecified length of time during basic formation in an "intercultural" community (Nos 136.1, 141.1, 141.2). It goes without saying that the studies undertaken shall take the needs of internationality into consideration. None the less, the situation may vary according to circumstances. If "interculturality" is inevitable from the first in the case of the Foundations, it comes usually dur-

ing or even after the "second cycle" elsewhere. No.106.2 mentions that the General Council "encourages initiatives towards an openness to and interchange between different cultures".

The "stage" (in formation) although it is not strictly of obligation, is most desirable as No.136 shows. It has not been made of obligation because of the variety of local situations that exists.

### 3. Further aspects of Chapter 6

The exploration of the theology behind the thinking of Chapter 6 has revealed a new emphasis and new considerations. We may add these further points.

- **Formation for Justice and Peace:** Chapter 6 does not deal with this explicitly. However in the light of Chapter 2, Our Mission, it is to be inferred as part of what a formation "in keeping with ... the present needs of the world" (No.100) necessitates. Ongoing formation should pay attention to "the signs of the times", so as to discern the "changes in attitudes and in outlook that are imperative" (No.142.2).
- **Preparing for the novitiate:** This provision, which the Chapter had judged to be important, has become a Constitution (No.108) at the insistence of the CRSI. The importance of this stage lies in the fact that it offers future novices a chance to become more mature, humanly and spiritually, and to begin to share the community living. So the future novices may be more highly motivated and more clear as to what they are choosing. What and when this preparatory experience is to be is left to the decision of the authorities in circumscriptions.
- **The formation of personnel for work in formation:** This is obviously necessary. Even if not explicitly dealt with in Chapter 6, the consideration is pre-supposed by No. 105.2. In planning to provide manpower for formation, a "reasonable" time to prepare for the work is allowed.
- **The place of dialogue in formation:** In Spiritan formation the relationship is not a teacher/learner one. Rather it is a

dialogue going on in a community. No.104 says: "The period of initial formation is lived in community". The major characteristics of every community of Spiritans, as set out in Chapter 3, serve equally to say what the formation community is to be: a common *projet*, shared responsibility, participation, sharing, relationships as between brothers, service rendered to the community, the exercise of discernment. Moreover, genuine spiritual direction, such as the Rule demands in all stages of formation is meaningless save in dialogue.

- **A common period in formation for Brothers and candidates for the priesthood:** This is needed to make sure of cooperation for mission and community living (No.135).
- **Retirement:** Preparing oneself to return to one's home country is mentioned in Nos 145.1 and 145.2. It is not, however, where one retires to that counts, in the home Church or the adopted one, so long as it be understood as a time of mission. A mission of sufferings and prayer on the part of older persons is of no lesser value than what robust and younger people are doing. The General Chapter specifically wished to underline the meaning of mission during this age in the lives of our members.
- **Associates:** This is another section the General Chapter introduced. No. 135.1 simply states that we offer formation to our associates. It does not elaborate on what this formation may be, and this needs to be supported by No.24.3, which says that we invite "them to share our spirituality and our apostolic life". The experiment still has to develop. Confreres differ in their attitudes to it. The appreciations offered concerning Chapter 2 of the Draft of 1984 reflect the thinking that then existed.
- **Ongoing formation:** This section covers Nos 142 to 145 and restates CDD of the General Chapter of 1968-1969 (cf CDD 366, 367). The Rule emphasises that ongoing formation is both a personal responsibility and a community one. What has to be acquired, right from the beginning of formation, is an attitude to personal development in every aspect of our calling; as No.100 puts it, formation is the continual deepening of our "apostolic life".

- **Training of the intellect:** There will perhaps be some who are shocked because the Rule hardly speaks of studies. It was impossible to do so, because courses of study and how they are followed differ so greatly from one place to the next, according to the needs of countries and of local Churches. The Rule, while wishing to ensure a well rounded education for members, states only general principles: the necessity of a technical and intellectual education that is adequate, the obligation on candidates for ordination to complete what studies the local and universal Church demands, the high profile given to mission theology (Nos 137-140), and, in ongoing formation, the emphasis to be given to updating in theology (No.142.1). Details are the responsibility of the circumscriptions, until such time, perhaps, as a program of studies for the Congregation may come into existence.
- **Quotations from Canon law:** These do make this section heavy going and slow its movement. The thinking of the General Chapter was that it would be useful to have to hand, notably for novitiates, the sum of the Church's Canon law. In fact, had the Chapter not put them in, we should have been obliged to by CRSI.

#### 4. Conclusion

a) On first sight and after a rapid reading, the impression could be gained that Chapter 6 of the Rule is more concerned with the process than the content of formation. On closer study the theological basis on which Spiritan post-conciliar formation rests can be seen. The insights and advances of the preceding Chapters of the Rule are worked into the Chapter on formation and lay down the foundations on which rests Spiritan living and necessarily then Spiritan formation. These insights are: apostolic life, missionary consecration/dedication, the central position of Christ and of his Spirit, community living, integration into local Church, etc. The special aim of Chapter 6 is to highlight the purpose of our Formation and the means to be employed. It is not a Chapter to be read in isolation. Rather must it be understood along with the Chapters that go before it.



b) Over the last twenty years, the formation of Spiritans has been much studied. Chapter 6 of the Rule of Life presents the results that have been gleaned from the experience of the process of forming members for Spiritan living. It has been a joint venture, formators and "formees" working together, either on the occasion of the General Chapter or through submissions evaluating the draft texts of the Rule. It is this that has given such worth to the final version. The broad shape of the very initial stage before novitiate and of the novitiate itself comes from the formators. Emphasis given to community living, to "internationality", to the vital place of the period of experience of mission during formation, these come from student comment prior to the General Chapter. Because what is in question is a process that is dynamic and in constant evolution, it is vital that this emphasis upon living and working together should never be allowed to fade.

## Chapter 7

### THE ORGANISATION OF THE CONGREGATION

After the eloquently expressed idealism and vision of the first several Chapters of the Rule, Chapter 7 will appear mundane indeed for it deals with the often prosaic details of administration.

The very length of this section may be (in fact has been) questioned by some members. Is it reasonable to devote half the pages of our Rule to Organisation and structure when there is so much else to be said? On examination it is difficult to see what can be omitted, because this section is, as it were, the skeleton which holds the body together. Just as the skeleton is not particularly glamorous but is absolutely essential, so too a well defined structure is vital to the accomplishment of our aims and objectives and even to providing a framework within which the prophetic voices may be heard.

St. Paul includes administration as one of the "gifts" that the Spirit gives for the building up of the Church. In conjunction with other gifts and ministries its function is to assist in promoting the common good (1 Cor 12).

Ideally, administration is a willing service exercised in such a manner as to enhance the participation of our confreres in the works of the apostolate. It is a service which helps to induct new members, to guide and sustain those who are in the thick of the apostolate and to ensure support for members who are infirm and for all of us as we grow older and retire from some ministries. This apostolate of administration will be offered with a spirit of openness, dialogue and co-operation which is fully equal to that which the Rule envisages in our approach to other apostolates. It would be an anomaly indeed, if we set out to bring the liberating mes-

sage of Christ to the world and at the same time were to implement our Rule in a manner which oppressed or inhibited the full human and spiritual development of our members. Those involved in the service of administration are to understand their role as being a full participation in the apostolic life which is at the heart of our Spiritan vocation.

The practical importance of any single item in Chapter 7 ought not to be judged by the amount of space devoted to it or the degree of detail with which it is treated. Some, though extremely important, are occasional events; such for instance is the election of the Superior General, which occupies the Congregation for a couple of days every six years. Others, though treated in less detail, have an ongoing significance. As an example of the latter one might cite the co-operation of neighbouring circumscriptions (regionalisation), a topic treated very briefly but which in the future may be of great consequence.

A few words on select items may be of help in the study of this section

## **1. Solidarity**

Throughout the Rule stress is placed on co-operation and participation. This spirit of solidarity and sharing is to mark relations at all levels: between the General Council and circumscriptions; circumscriptions and communities; and within each community.

This spirit of solidarity aims to put an end once and for all to class distinctions and inequalities in the Congregation. All members are called by their consecration to participate as equals in the life of the Spiritan family.

The collegial format which characterises Chapters is extended to the exercise of authority in all segments of the Congregation, an authority which seeks to delegate responsibility in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity.

## **2. Community**

In the former Constitutions no definition was given of community, whereas in the present Rule it is defined in terms of life lived in such a way as to take into account missionary apostolic engagement, cultural environment and the background of the members. Community, rooted in local Church and culture, is a shared vision giving strength and direction to our apostolic life.

Two kinds of community are mentioned. The first is the more traditional type which envisages the members grouped under one roof and participating in a regular daily routine. The number of members required to constitute such a community is a minimum of three.

Also recognised are Regional Communities composed of members who, for apostolic reasons, live alone or with another confrere or even with non-Spiritans and often are scattered over a large area. Gatherings of the members, while regular, are of necessity less frequent than those in the first kind of community. Directives for the organisation and development of community life apply to both local and regional bodies (Nos 34, 151-155).

Because they are relatively undeveloped, regional communities will need careful attention and guidance.

Finally Spiritan communities are seen as instruments of evangelisation in local Church and culture and will have an influence beyond themselves both by their example and their outreach (Nos 151-154).

## **3. Authority/superiors**

The relationship between the authority of the central administration and that of circumscriptions has, in recent years, been the focus of some attention. The Rule has attempted to capture the essence of this dialogue and places emphasis on solidarity and co-operation.

In fact at all levels stress is laid on the open and cooperative nature of communities. The authority of the Superior is



seen as an exercise of service. Provision is made for consultation right along the line starting with the selection of the Superior, the establishment of community councils and continuing through all important decisions (No.155).

#### **4. Circumscriptions**

All groupings within the Congregation are now called "circumscriptions". This permits, in addition to the more traditional Province and District, the formation of other units in response to particular needs or works and as times and circumstances dictate. Circumscriptions are organised in view of promoting our apostolic life and the type selected will suit specific exigencies (No. 156 ff).

#### **5. Foundations**

The term Foundation is used for the first time in our Rule. Foundations, composed for the most part of indigenous members, are new circumscriptions which will in time become Provinces. It is recognised that these are as yet often in a fluid state and frequently differ from one another in structure. Ample room is given for further development both of the concept and of its practical implications (No.161 ff).

#### **6. Enlarged General Council**

The nature of the Enlarged General Council has finally been decided. It is to be a consultative body with stress on regional collaboration and representation. Its precise format remains flexible and it is required to meet at least once between Chapters (No. 206).

#### **7. Regionalisation**

The concept of Regionalisation is introduced in the context of the Enlarged General Council. The Rule refers to "re-

gional groupings" to determine delegates (No.206.5) and to discuss agenda items (No. 206.6) for the E.G.C.

In practice many "regional groupings" have gone much further and meet frequently to exchange views or to promote joint projects in such areas as apostolic works, formation, care of the elderly, development of foundations, assistance to circumscriptions in difficulty, etc.

The practical implications of this idea will necessitate considerable planning and dialogue in the years ahead with stress on trust and co-operation. Regionalisation may prove to be a means of simplifying our administrative system.

## **8. Common vision**

It is foreseen that all circumscriptions – provinces, districts and others – will, by means of Chapters and other forms of consultation, define their goals and objectives, their specific apostolic tasks, pastoral engagements, manner of recruiting, financial policy, etc. (Nos 177–183).

## **9. Material goods**

The care of material goods is seen as a responsibility shared by the superior, bursar and all members of the community. Thus the bursar is an *ex officio* member of the community council but is also required to present a balance sheet and budget to the community. The manner in which this exercise is carried out is to be determined by the community in response to local needs, with the intent that all members of circumscriptions and communities should be fully informed on financial matters. The wise use of material resources is placed in the context of apostolic witness (Nos 173–176, 228–231).

## **10. Elections**

Although Chapter 7 sets out in detail the regulation for the conduct of the General Chapter and for the election of the

Superior General and Council, this in no way prejudices the research which the General Chapter of 1986 has remitted to the present General Council to carry out.

Note also the specifics of choosing major superiors. Each circumscription is required to use one of the two methods outlined and to follow it carefully (No.167).

## **11. Transfers**

Change from one circumscription to another, even on a temporary basis, requires the agreement of the major superiors concerned, including that of the superior of the province "of origin" (No.159).

A confrere who resides in a circumscription other than his own is subject to the rules and requirements of the jurisdiction in which he is living (No. 184.1).

## **12. Appendices**

The Appendices are an integral part of the Rule with the same force and validity as any other section. They treat separately three specific topics and were taken out of Chapter 7 in an effort to make the latter somewhat less congested and more readable (Nos 187-214).

## **13. Conclusion**

Finally it is to be hoped that the Rule of Life and this accompanying commentary may be of help to all of us in deepening our commitment to the Spiritan way of life and in becoming better servants of the Kingdom. Both documents, as products of fallible human beings are flawed, but at this moment they are the best efforts of the Chapter and of the General Council. Let us celebrate them together with one heart and one soul.

## **DIALOGUE WITH THE CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR INSTITUTES**

### **Modifications of the text from the General Chapter 1986**

#### **1. The charge handed down by the General Chapter**

The General Chapter of 1986 gave a mandate to the Superior General and his Council to formulate the Rule of Life definitively, correcting it according to whatever the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (CRSI) should demand.

The General Council named a commission of four to put the finishing touches on the shape of the text and to harmonise the (French) style, taking care that the contents were not touched. The text has been improved in places by putting in paragraph divisions or a numbering that facilitates reading.

Similarly in treating of matters relating to circumscriptions before those relating to the General Administration, the preference of the Chapter has been respected and systematised. Scripture quotations (in French) are all from the New Jerusalem Bible, it being the best known text in all languages.

#### **2. Dialogue with the Congregation for Religious**

The text was sent to the CRSI on November 15, 1986 and was returned with about 60 suggestions for amendments. Discussion then began, in which we argued for retention of texts where the suggested change was not acceptable. On April 9, 1987 new additions were suggested by a more numer-



ous body, known as a "Congress" of the CRSI. The ensuing dialogue ended with the approval of the present text of the Spiritan Rule of Life on June 7, 1987, Pentecost Sunday.

### **3. Requests that have been agreed to**

The General Council asked that the CRSI permit No.59.1 (prudence and self-denial in support of chastity) and No.99.3 (the Rosary) to remain as Norms, but, on the other hand, did accept No.99.3 as a separate number among the Norms. The CRSI, in addition, withdrew several requests for changes, having accepted the explanations we made or the way we slightly changed the phrasing.

### **4. Modifications**

#### **a) Norms that have been transferred to Constitution status**

Overall the CRSI asked that every article that referred to Canon law be situated in the Constitutions, which can be changed solely with the approval of the Holy See. The following is a list of these: 20, 41, 59, 65, 66, 67, 68, 79, 95, 108, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 124, 126, 127, 131, 134, 138, 139, 140, 144, 145, 168, 169, 174, 175, 176, 179, 180, 181, 183, 189, 213, 229, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 243, 244.

#### **b) New or additional ideas**

Some ideas or articles that are additional were proposed by the CRSI. We accepted them either as proposed or in slightly altered form. These concern, in general, what is important, even essential, for the religious life and what is quoted in Canon law:

- Thus No.41 (parts of buildings/houses that are reserved to the community) and No.43 (the use made of the media).
- The CRSI asked that we draw up one article dealing with our obligation to observe the Rule of Life and one with obedience to the Pope. This first request has been worked into No.80 (ex article 68) and the second into No.81 (ex article

69), looking upon our obeying the Pope in the broad context of our obedience to the Church.

- We had also to add (No.95) explicit reference to daily examination of conscience; and to the duty incumbent on priest and deacon of the recitation of the entirety of the Liturgy of the Hours (No.97).
- No.134: it is the major superior who has the obligation of making the canonical enquiry and granting dismissorial letters.
- The CRSI asked us to make it clear that every community, great or small, should have a community council. This brought us to laying down how a council was to be set up in various sorts of houses (No.155.5 and 6 (ex No.116.5)).
- An article was asked for to deal with approving the writings of members concerning morals or religion. We responded by noting this among the various things to which major superiors look on visitation (No.171).
- In No.189 it is noted that the decisions of Chapters of circumscriptions are submitted to the approval of the Superior General and his Council.
- In No.229 the entities in the Congregation capable of being juridical persons are noted.

### c) Modification in or additions to the Chapter text

**No.2.** (the nature of the institute). We "respond creatively to the needs of our time". At the request of the CRSI this is defined as "the needs of evangelisation of our time", and we add the reference to Nos 4 and 12 where it is laid down how, in our Congregation, this evangelisation is taken in hand.

**No.15.3.** "In certain circumstances it is not possible for us to preach the gospel openly", and we were justifying being present there as missionaries by our "conviction that the Kingdom of God exists there already". We were asked to make this latter sentence clearer, which is the origin of the phrase that comes next - "in such cases, our motivation is the conviction that the Holy Spirit is already present and that our pres-

ence is genuine witness and service in the name of the gospel for the Kingdom (Ad Gentes, No.6)".

**No.32.** In response to a request for clarification, we have changed the former No.30.2, as follows, and put it in the Constitutions as No.32: "A religious community lives in a house that has been legitimately erected. Some members, however, because of the necessities of the missionary life and certain situations foreseen in Canon 665.1, live with people who are not Spiritans and sometimes even alone".

**No.47 (ex No.43).** We were obliged to state specifically that the Superior is not solely the "animator" but also the person who is "responsible for" the community. For No.39.3 the same type of remark was made: Superiors are quite specifically charged with aiding members in difficulty, as in Nos 199 (ex No.151) and 205 (ex No.158) in the case of the Superior General.

**Chapter IV.** The title "In celibacy for the Kingdom" was replaced by "In chastity for the Kingdom". Here, because the General Chapter capitulants had been insistent that all states of life were called to chastity, even perfect chastity, we were in difficulties. This is why, in the text itself (No.57), we asked not to use the expression "perfect chastity", but rather a more exact phrasing that the CRSI did accept. We commit ourselves to "keeping without compromise" the chastity proper to our state (consecrated celibacy).

**No.63 (ex No.58).** It was pointed out to us that we do not "put all our goods in common" (patrimonial goods), so the wording was changed to take this into account.

**Nos 64 to 70 (ex No.59 to 60.1)** have been put in a different order, for an easier understanding of the text, taking into account also the sections that became Constitutions at the suggestion of the CRSI.

**No.69.** Each member shall give an account to his superior of his use of pocket money.

**No.73 (ex No.63).** The spirit of the article on Spiritan dress (the habit) remains identical with the Chapter's thinking. The Spiritan habit is the dress of the clergy in each place. With

this determined, such alterations as may be necessary may be made by the Superior General and his Council. We succeeded in arguing that the variousness of our missionary enterprises rendered a uniform application of Canon 669 impossible.

**No.78 (ex No.68).** The formulation "the formal commands of superiors" is reserved to commands expressly given in the name of the vow, a very rare thing. Hence the change in the text, "the obligation of obedience to the decisions of our legitimate superiors in conformity with the Rule of Life".

**No.108.** The second paragraph, grouping ex Nos 92.2 and 93.1, establishes more clearly the need to set up a "preparatory period" before novitiate. The CRSI has insisted that there be this time for discernment.

**No.126 and 127.** There is added to the formula of profession "and before you ..... (the name of the major superior or his delegate)". The superior is also the one who gives approval to the candidate's elected formula.

**No.129.** With reference to Canon 654 the idea of being consecrated to God "through the ministry of the Church" is added here.

**No.134 (ex No.106.6).** The word "normally" (F. *normalement*) was removed at the request of the CRSI. It now reads "candidates for the priesthood should make their perpetual profession before receiving the diaconate".

**No.154 (ex No.115).** We made it explicit that Spiritan communities are to be set up only following upon approval in writing from the bishop of the place.

**No.178 (ex No.139.1).** These explanations are made to take Canon law into account (the total of elected members be at least equal to that of members by right).

**No.197 (ex No.139.1).** We were requested to state in the constitutions the number of General Assistants. Because of this we have put down a minimum number which cannot be altered, being a minimum. Chapters may, at all events, determine a precise number of assistants as needs may be (this at present is seven: No.197.1).



**Nos 203 and 205 (ex No.154).** We were obliged to state explicitly that the dismissal of a professed member is a matter of a collegial vote, not a deliberative vote, of the General Council. (This is, moreover, the one case in which the General Council may vote collegially).

**No.209.2.** We add that the report of the General Bursar has received prior approval from the Superior General with the consent of his Council.

**No.215 (ex No.163).** "Authentic" interpretation of the Constitutions, which means the final court of appeal in case of disagreement as to the meaning of an article in the Constitutions, is a right of the Holy See.

**No.229.** An additional article to give juridical definitions as required by the CRSI.

**No.236 (ex No.196.2).** The invalidity of a vote for oneself is suppressed, as it is no longer in Canon law.

**No.245 (ex No.198).** The Congregation for Religious, in requiring that only the First Assistant must be a priest, has let it be understood that it is not necessary that all the General Assistants be priests.



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